TECHNICAL CULTURE

[26] In all societies, the Kaska Indians are faced with the problem of surviving in a physical environment. In this division we will discuss Kaska culture as it is directed toward maintaining adaptation to the climate, weather, and natural resources of a specific geographical area, while at the same time it serves to preserve life and comfort by satisfying the physical needs of the human organism.

ANNUAL CYCLE

[231] The economic life of the Kaska tribes is closely bound up with the exploitation of their home surroundings. During the summer months, the people live leisurely around the trading post, relying upon the traders' stocks for almost all of their requirements. The means to buy these goods, however, is the money received for the furs was trapped during the previous winter and spring.

A good time to begin studying the annual cycle is in August or September, when the people, by quitting Lower Post, put an end to their relatively idle summer. Returning home to the winter settlements and bag lines is always undertaken with great eagerness since, among other rewards, it means relief from the expensive diet of canned meat and other staples and promises a welcome supply of fresh meat and fish. The months until early November are occupied with building drying racks, smoking huts, building or repairing cabins, and manufacturing equipment like toboggans, sleighs and snowshoes, which will be necessary for winter trapping. With the first heavy snowfall, knowing harvesters of several are important and trapping begins for the fur. This activity is often interrupted around Christmas for a visit to the trading post by men and boys. Then skins are sold and additional food purchased for consumption home. Trips or these such trips may be made in the course of a winter. With the arrival of March, hunter and [illegible] trapping ceases and when the period ends in spring, the people are ready to undertake their annual visit to Lower Post, where they arrive in late May or June.

CAPITAL

[27] Against this brief's eye view of the annual of Kaska life, we now take up in detail the economically productive routines of the people. All of the exploitative and technological processes to be described depend on a considerably small accumulation of capital or produce goods, much of which is of highly little monetary value.

[28] A large portion of the capital goods used by the Kaska is not manufactured by the society but is purchased from traders. Such goods include guns, traps, fish nets, sewing machines, snow nets, boxes, steel little and implements, needles, vessels, and utensils. Pack dogs are domesticated locally although small home dogs are purchased from Tahltan Indians. Other products, equally important in carrying out adaptive routines, are manufactured by the society. Included here are hatchets, windlasses, pickaxes, dogsticks, bows, wedges, and skin stretchers. The construction of some entire manufactures, however, de-

Belts

A good many belts used in ordinary dress both by men and women had more or less quill embroidery on them and some had fringes or thongs along their lower edge which were strung with dentalia. Some others were ornamented with fringing or plaiting only. Very few belts were altogether plain.

PERSONAL ADORNMENT

Necklaces were formerly much used, but more by women than by men. Necklaces and collars pertaining especially to Lelo, Saiwana, widows etc. have already been described.

It seems no necklaces of quills were used, nor others of bone tubes or copper tubes.

Some wealthy people wore large plates or pendants of copper with white beads inlaid on them. These were obtained from the Tlingit and they were costly. One informant said these plates of copper were worth more than similar plates of gold would be worth now. A person owning one was considered wealthy in to said.*

Dentalium shell necklaces were used by everyone. The best ones consisted of very large and ivory white shells. These were much more valuable than necklaces made of medium, small, and poorly coloured shells. The shells were strung on sinew thread and carbon string and were of various sizes and lengths. Some people used a number. It appears none of them were of broken plate form nor covered the breast in a series of necklaces connected with a single neck piece, as was common among the plateau tribes. Necklaces of bear teeth were used a good deal by women and children. Men who had bear, wolf, beaver, etc. as emblems wore sinew of these animals as necklaces. After the trappers came bead necklaces came into use. Figures of stone, etc., enclosed in leather were much used as pendants. Bone ornaments were in vogue. Some of them were of shells.

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*(The Tlingit tell a story of the origin of these copper plates. The first one was obtained by a poor man who became wealthy).

4: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard
Dease River

These terms are followed to the present day amongst all the Indians on the Yukon, Pelly, Teslin Lake, and Upper Liard, but the Mountain Indians do not.

Exogamous moieties regulated marriage. Members of one division also prepared the opposite group's dead for burial. The sides tendered potlatches to one another. On such occasions the members of each group adorned their faces with a particular colored paint, blue for the Crows and red for the Wolves. The designs, however, did not differ. When a large number of people camped together each moiety "rustled" wood for the fire, stacking poles in a single heap. Then they would slide the fuel into the fire, each side in succession adding one piece after the other. Afterwards the brothers-in-law (i.e., the men belonging to opposite moieties) sat around and talked. The practice of fire sending may be regarded as a simple rite of intensification,[18] serving to promote interaction between the opposite and thus to contribute to the solidarity of the larger aggregate.

Three social levels were distinguished in the pre-contact Kaska community, the rich, poor, and slaves. Social stratification on the basis of wealth is a prominent feature in the culture of the Pacific Drainage Athapaskans and is even more extensively developed among the Indians of the Northwest Coast. One informant (O) knew about an hereditary nobility among the Tlingit but stated flatly that the system of social stratification found there had no counterpart in the Caribou. Such a statement is not unexpected in terms of the association to be anticipated between class structure and surplus-wealth production.

A rich man, *ninaiche* (the same word today is used to designate the Supreme Being), stood out among his fellows because he could support four or five wives, wore finer clothes, enjoyed more possessions, and employed occasional servants. His word received ready attention. "People always listened to a rich man." Wealth derived from skillful hunting and trapping. The poor man, *tsnayteyaa'ii'a*, lived with a single wife and often found it difficult to provide even for her and their children. Poorer clothes distinguished the poor man and in group affairs his word carried little weight. Ideally, cordial relations existed between the rich and poor. If a rich man spoke harshly to his less fortunate peer the former's supernatural power might desert him and all his ability to kill game would be unknown. Under such circumstances helping a poor man would assist him to recoup his luck. Poor men who received assistance from wealthier people repaid such help by working for their patrons, for example, visiting the latters' deadfalls. In this way the rich came to enjoy the labor of servants. A slave, *ulna* (this is said to be a Tlingit word adopted into the Liard River vocabulary), represented a war captive. Inasmuch as the Kaska gradually killed many such captives, slaves were usually women. A man sometimes referred to his to his slave's children as slaves.[19]

Father Allard, an Oblate missionary stationed at McDame Creek, states, "All members of the tribe are free to hunt and fish over all the tribal territory. They live and lab in little bands of one, two or three families,—each family consisting of father, mother and children, with sometimes other members,

[18] Chapple and Coon, Principles of Anthropology (1942), 455-456.
[19] See above, p. 19.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Dease River

married or single.[8] Such a description represents the aboriginal pattern of Dease River social organization. Each band recognized a "chief,"[9] or leader, who guided the people in hunting. Outstanding in his ability to secure game, a headman was also always a rich man. Sometimes as many as seven families comprised his following. As a headman aged and became incapacitated, he relinquished his role in favor of a son or brother whose duties included caring for the retired leader. 621 622

All the Dease River Indians were divided into two moieties, tsinli ("sides"), the Wolf and Crow. The two sections represented exogamous units in which membership followed the matrilineal line. Potlaches promoted interaction between the divisions, the members of which also prepared each other's dead for burial and competed in sports.[10] 616 431

Rich and poor men tended to stand out in the pre-contact community. The former represented able hunters who managed to secure large quantities of meat and skins. Such abundance attracted followers and dependents who accepted their patron's authority. Thus rich men also held positions of band leadership. The poor depended on the wealthy for food and skins. They made no return for such assistance. Sometimes a man became temporarily impoverished as a result of losing his hunting "luck." Help to such a man was advantageous because he would certainly remember the generosity when his fortunes turned. Poverty, as long as it did not stem from laziness, provided no bar to marriage, but a lazy man merited only laughter and jeers.[11] 565 556 [476]

[8] Allard, *Notes on the Kaska and Upper Liard Indians* (1928), 24-25.

[9] When the Hudson's Bay Company entered the Cassiar, they appointed local chiefs to develop trapping. The word is derived from this period. The "company chief" was provided with a certain amount of regalia and received flour and tobacco to distribute to his "boys." Upon the Indians' arrival at the post the manager fired a gun to salute the executive. Prior to this period, informants agreed, no comparable leader existed among the Dease River people. [177]

[10] Teit reports a more complex social system for the adjoining Tahltan. "Their social organization appears to be based largely on that obtaining among the Tlingit. Like the latter, they are divided into two exogamous phratries called Wolf and Raven (as in the case of the Kaska, the former is more important and is said to represent the original Tahltan people). Children belong to the phratry and clan of their mother. Each phratry consists of three clans or gentes, each of which has a hereditary chief and a territory of its own. These six chiefs form the governing body of the tribe. The clans do not have special totems, our traditions deriving their origin from mythological ancestors. Crests and totems usually belong to the phratry. A seventh clan exists at the present day, having originated about 130 years ago through immigration of and intermarriage with the Tlingit. It belongs to the Wolf phratry, but has no recognized territory nor chief within the country of the Tahltans; it is called by its Tlingit name. There is no aristocracy of rank and wealth, but these nobles have no special rights in hunting grounds, fisheries, etc. Methods of obtaining rank, the potlatch, and many of the social and ceremonial customs of the tribe are closely adopted from the Tlingit." (Teit, *Ou Tahltan* (*Ethnobotany*) *Wood* [1912], 484-485. See also Jenness, *Indians of Canada* [1932], 372.) Mrs. William Strong, of Vancouver and Telegraph Creek, B. C., loaned the present writer several photographs of a Tahltan potlatch held in relatively recent times. These showed men wearing dark cloth robes embroidered with what appeared to be crest figures and very similar to the robes often illustrated for the Northwest Coast.

In Lower Post we learned of only two exogamous moieties among the Tahltan, the Wolf and Crow. Teit's description of clans with territorial rights does not sound convincing and may refer to local divisions in the Tahltan nation.

[11] Slaves were reported for the Tahltan where one "chief," Mohsaka, is said to have held 20 captive workers. These learned and dabed for their master and were well treated. (Personal communication from